



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 8 MARCH 2026 – Third Sunday of Lent

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain,
and entered not into glory before he was crucified:
mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross,
may find it none other than the way of life and peace;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 95.

- 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord; ♦
let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving ♦
and be glad in him with psalms.
- 3 For the Lord is a great God ♦
and a great king above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths of the earth ♦
and the heights of the mountains are his also.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it, ♦
and his hands have moulded the dry land.
- 6 Come, let us worship and bow down ♦
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
- 7 For he is our God; ♦
we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.
- 8 O that today you would listen to his voice: ♦
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
on that day at Massah in the wilderness,
- 9 'When your forebears tested me, and put me to the proof, ♦
though they had seen my works.
- 10 'Forty years long I detested that generation and said, ♦
"This people are wayward in their hearts;
they do not know my ways."
- 11 'So I swore in my wrath, ♦
"They shall not enter into my rest."

A reading from the letter to the Romans, chapter 5, verses 1-11.

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is John, chapter 4, verses 5-42.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord,
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 4, verses 5-42

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end...

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' The woman said to him, 'Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.'

Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!' The woman said to him, 'Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I am he, the one who is speaking to you.'

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, 'What do you want?' or, 'Why are you speaking with her?' Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, 'Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?' They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples said to one another, 'Surely no one has brought him something to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.'

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.' So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there for two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.'

A Reflection from Hannah

The Samaritan woman has come out to draw water right in the hottest part of the day. She has a bucket, and there, at the well, one solitary figure is resting- thirsty and hungry in the noonday heat. There follows a breath-taking, and lengthy conversation that goes as deep as that water under the ground, and that is, startlingly, a conversation of equals.

And in that encounter there is mutual need, and mutual nourishment. The woman is, in all likelihood, drawing water in the heat of the day because she is an outcast- it is a miserable time of day to be carrying water. For her, conversations would be rare, the sense of being ascribed any human dignity, even rarer. But here she is, emboldened to speak, and immediately a divide is brought to light- 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' And how does Jesus respond? Well, it's clear that such a divide, such prejudice is of no interest to him whatsoever- that 'otherness' is obliterated by his eagerness to move the conversation deeper- like the bucket descending, and to talk about 'living water'.

The woman has a life-changing encounter as the two of them talk about the saving power of God, and the promise of a messiah. She is 'seen' in the fullness of her humanity, and she names Jesus as Lord. That day, far from being invisible, something of an embarrassment and someone who lurks on the edges, she was seen. She was seen, bathed in the redeeming, renewing light of Christ. Nothing was hidden, and she felt no shame- in fact, she runs off shouting 'come and meet the man who told me everything I ever did.' Jesus changes his plans and decides to stay in her village that night. A five-minute conversation transforms not just her life, but (we can assume), that of so many others in her community.

But as I said, it is an encounter of mutual need, and mutual nourishment. What does the woman provide? Well, amongst other things, she has a bucket and Jesus doesn't. Like many female figures in the Old Testament, she is the bringer of water- the one who is associated with something necessary for human life. And her openness enables the depths of both the real well and the metaphorical one to be plumbed. She is seen- but she chooses to let that happen, and that means Jesus is able to speak to her heart in the noonday sun, where there are no shadows and nothing is hidden.

It is a beautiful image of an oasis in the midst of everyday drudgery. It's an oasis for both of them- for the Samaritan woman at least, that moment was completely unexpected, and happened in the intimacy of a single conversation in the middle of a daily task. The woman at the well reminds us that the very meaning of life can be lying in wait for us even, perhaps especially, in the smallest and most mundane jobs.